

**Oral History Interview with  
Howard O. Boltz**

**Cal Poly Pomona University Library**

## **Howard O. Boltz Summary**

Howard O. Boltz was a pioneer in landscape architecture education and was the founder of Cal Poly Pomona's Department of Landscape Architecture in 1957. Boltz also served on the California State Board of Landscape Architecture during the early years of professional registration. Boltz was a Cal Poly Pomona educator since its humble beginnings in the 1940s on the Voorhis Campus teaching in the ornamental horticulture department. It took him approximately ten years after his arrival to Cal Poly in 1947 to establish a landscape architecture major at the university. Furthermore in 1963, Boltz proposed the four-year undergraduate major in urban planning that would eventually blossom into the approval of a program that would offer a Bachelor's in Science degree in urban planning in 1967. With the establishment of the Department of Landscape Architecture at Cal Poly Pomona, Boltz would remain the department head until his death in 1968.

## **Subject Headings**

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona  
Landscape Architecture  
Voorhis Campus  
Women in Higher Education

### Legal Statement

All uses of this manuscript are covered by a legal agreement between Cal Poly Pomona and the interviewee. The manuscript is thereby made available for research purposes. All library rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved to the Cal Poly Pomona Library.

Requests for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to the Cal Poly Pomona Library and should include identification of the specific passages to be quoted, anticipated use of passages, and identification of the user.

## **Table of Contents**

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	1
Arrival to Cal Poly Pomona	1-2
Expansion of Cal Poly Pomona	2-3
Establishment of the Department of Landscape Architecture	3
Admittance of Women to Cal Poly Pomona	3-4
Life and Responsibilities as the Head of the Department of Landscape Architecture	4-5
Influx of Student Enrollment and Graduate Success	5-6
Plans for the Future	6

# Howard O. Boltz

April 5, 1966

*Interview Conducted by Sharon Sforzini Grant  
Transcribed by Jose Quirarte*

**SG:** This is one of a series of taped interviews dealing with an oral history of Cal Poly Pomona as seen through the personal experiences and remembrances of those individuals who were present during its early growth and development. Mr. Howard O. Boltz head of the Landscape Architecture Department is interviewed on this tape. Mr. Boltz do you recall when you first became interested in the educational field?

**HB:** Yes, I think it was when I was in college at the University of California Berkeley at the Landscape Architecture Department. As part of the program there of the upperclassmen, quite frequently took pains to give criticisms of work to sophomores and juniors and this educational experience that I had seemed to be enjoyable to me.

Later on in the army I had to do a good deal of educational work and I enjoyed this too; so as a result, I took education courses in addition to my bachelor's degree and master's degree in Landscape Architecture at "Cal" [University of California State Berkeley] and got a general secondary to prepare me for teaching. (unintelligible)

I didn't have any experience teaching prior to coming to Cal Poly [Pomona], but I did have a couple of years of experience in private practice working as a landscape architect. I arrived at Cal Poly in the fall of 1947 at the Voorhis Campus—I think my first impressions of the campus were similar to most people who come there. They have the impression of a country club atmosphere with a—wonderful environment for learning and education—and I think this was a very pleasant experience in teaching on that campus for a number of years that we were there until 1956, in spite of the fact that we had to do with rather makeshift facilities at times.

For a long time, well, I had my office in the classrooms up in the H building, which was a war surplus building that had been reconstructed on the campus and used for instructional purposes. I remember they took part of that building and set it up for chemistry labs—I had another little corner for drafting design labs for the landscape design courses I was teaching at the time.

I can remember also the load that the instructors had on that campus was about two or three times as much as what we consider a full load today. Teaching of five classes in one quarter is a good deal more than what we needed—it was really too much but we were interested in expanding curriculum and an ongoing program, so I guess we were willing to take on this load in order to assure development of the program.

**SG:** This expansion your talking about, did you foresee the use of the Kellogg Campus or were you thinking of expansion on the Voorhis grounds?

**HB:** Well, I think at one time—of course the Voorhis grounds is pretty limited. There is only 150 acres there and much of this is unusable, only the flat level areas of the top are suitable. So that if expansion would take place, we would have to acquire acreage to the south which was the Phillips Property—and I think this was explored at one time by the people in the administration. I think that the Voorhis Campus was at a certain time in its early history that is after the war was a question mark as to whether it would be suitable to continue or whether it should be discontinued. Fortunately, not long after the restarting of it after the war—Mr. McPhee, through friends and legislature in Washington, were able to acquire the property through the Kellogg Foundation. (thump)

**SG:** Mr. Boltz, how did you feel about the move from the Voorhis Campus, to the new Kellogg site?

**HB:** Well, I think we had mixed feelings about it. We enjoyed the atmosphere of the Voorhis Campus but I think we looked forward to the new opportunities that the larger acreage of the Kellogg Campus provided for future expansion. (thump)

**SG:** Are you homesick for the Voorhis Campus?

**HB:** Well, I think the Voorhis Campus will always have a special place with all of us that were there for so long—really can't beat the environment of that particular place but I think that—at least as far as I am concerned I have been so busy since then that I haven't really had a chance to be homesick.

**SG:** Were the grounds as beautiful as this [Kellogg] campus?

**HB:** Well, I think it had a different kind of atmosphere—I think they are equally nice, equally pleasant to be in. (thump)

**SG:** Do you know if the Voorhis Campus is still in use?

**HB:** Yes, it's in use as an educational center for people out in industry and in agriculture to come in for one day; two day; ten day; two-week refresher courses.

**SG:** But it's not used for instruction and such for Cal Poly students then?

**HB:** That is correct.

**SG:** I see. Do you remember what the first year at Kellogg was like? How the equipment was transferred over and the type of buildings students had to take instruction in?

**HB:** Well, a transfer of equipment from the Voorhis Campus to the Kellogg Campus was made during the summer mostly with the help of student assistants—carried on by the Planned Operations Department using colleagues' trucks, and on the whole it was handled very smoothly.

I remember when we first arrived and instruction started in September of that year, that the contractor was still in the process of finishing the building and tearing out some of the concrete in the hallways to make it level so that carrying on a lecture with the static of a (??) outside was a little bit disconcerting—

**SG:** Yes

**HB:** —but I think we were all so happy to be in new facilities and facilities that were so much better than what we had before, that we bore with this. Instruction—I understand at that time, some lectures were carried on in the Propagation House down in the Ornamental Horticulture building which wasn't quite ideal but worked very well at least.

**SG:** Was your department very large at this time?

**HB:** Well the major in Landscape Architecture started in 1957. We started with about 106 students and the enrollment seemed to grow pretty substantially and pretty regularly each year until the present time in 1965 there are 246—that is of last fall of 1965.

**SG:** Well, prior to 1957, your classes were offered under what department?

**HB:** Well, I first taught in the Ornamental Horticulture department—taught Landscape Design classes—and then it took from the time I started in 1947—it took me exactly ten years to get a major established. We started with three full-time staff members and developed ever since. We always had problems since the beginning of finding staff members, finding faculty members to teach, finding space for labs to be located in—for two years we were in the Science Building using two lecture spaces for drafting and design labs and then we moved for three years in the upper floor of the Library—in a rather large section which we had space for four labs. And then about four years ago we moved to our present new facilities in the “AG” [Agriculture] building.

**SG:** You mentioned having trouble getting instructors for this department. Is this because most students after graduation will go right into the field, rather than thinking of an education profession?

**HB:** Well, I think this is true and we encourage this to happen—I know with our own graduates. The problem occurs when we try to recruit a man who's been out in the field for five to ten years and the salary that we are allowed to offer beginning instructors at the colleges is usually a good deal less by five or \$6,000 than what he is making on the outside.

**SG:** So you've got to be dedicated to the educational ideal—(laughs)

**HB:** Yes, you have to be dedicated to teaching. It's been quite usual that our graduates have gone out and started—and within a year were making more than the faculty members were being paid at the colleges—

**SG:** Well, I guess they are very highly qualified for their jobs then. How did you feel about the admittance of women to the Kellogg Campus?

**HB:** Well, I think this is something that many of us have felt would always help the spirit and the *esprit de corps* and the dress and appearance of the male students on campus (laughs). So, I think—I haven't objected to it. I think things have been very good for the whole college.

**SG:** Do you have any coed's in your department?

**HB:** Yes, we have a few; we have eighteen at the present time.

**SG:** And they compare favorably with your male students?

**HB:** In what regards—

**SG:** Well, grade wise, interest?

**HB:** Well, I think taking them as a whole in with the male students they are about the same. We have those that are interested in Landscape Architecture and those that really aren't. This is true of both male and the (??) student; there is really no difference—

**SG:** Well, is the field as wide open for a woman going into this occupation as it would be for a man?

**HB:** Yes, there is no discrimination as far as employees are concerned—they [employers] will employ women just as readily as men and this is also true of civil service jobs of course.

**SG:** Um-hm. Before you became head of the department, what position did you hold?

**HB:** Well, I was an instructor in the Ornamental Horticulture department teaching in Landscape Design.

**SG:** I see, and as head of the department you must find it necessary to cut down the number of classes you instruct. Do you prefer your administrative duties, or do you desire to return to teaching more classes?

**HB:** Well, I think the desire and pleasure is in teaching because this is where you get the main reward from—possibly less pay than you might get on the outside—the reward of seeing students catch on to ideas and concepts and develop and improve. Of course, you don't get this in the administration end of it, but on the other hand, somebody has to do the administration work, which is a primary importance for the future of the whole department. Since this is my responsibility, I take it really willingly and don't begrudge the giving up of the instruction—although I probably enjoy the instruction quite more.

**SG:** When did you take on the position of head of your department?

**HB:** Well, I have been responsible for this since 1957.



**SG:** That is quite a long time. Have you done any projects or made any changes on the original curriculum since you've been head of the department?

**HB:** Well, this is a continuous ongoing thing. We are continuing reviewing, that is the faculty in the department and I, the relationship of courses, how one course fits in with another, what is being covered, and whether we are leaving anything out. As a result of this, over the past years, we have had quite a number of changes you might term minor (??). We have added courses, we deleted some courses that were required previously, and our intent of course is to always try to reach the goal of perfection. I don't think we will every reach that but I think we will always be trying and searching for new teaching techniques and new ways to approach the problem of education of Landscape Architecture. I think this is good because the time that we feel that we have reached the ultimate then is the time we should watch out because I think we will be starting to go downhill.

**SG:** (laughs) Do you feel that your graduates are ready to go right out into the field, or is graduate work necessary before they could fully take on these responsibilities?

**HB:** I think that they are prepared to go out and take a job in the field. In fact, just recently I was on sabbatical leave in which I visited offices of landscape architects. Some of them volunteered the information to me that they sure did appreciate our graduates—that they would rather hire our graduates than graduates from any other department of Landscape Architecture, which is quite encouraging.

**SG:** Then you find your department is expanding, rather than having enrollment decline?

**HB:** Yes, continuously. In that regard, in 1962 we initiated an auction in our program in Urban Planning, which we have in the present time. In 1963, we proposed a four-year undergraduate major in Urban Planning, which is still in the Chancellor's Office waiting for approval.

**SG:** I see. Have you made any plans for accommodating the student enrollment, which is growing so fantastically? Are you going to have to hire more faculty and staff, or do you find that you are going to have to limit the student enrollment?

**HB:** Well, at the present time if a student qualifies for admission to a state college, we will admit him. Although we do have a quota, which was established last year for the department—there are continuous problems as a result of expanding enrollment. Finding staff, as I mentioned before, and also finding space for facilities to carry on the instructional program—right now, we are trying to meet this need by using existing facilities within the agricultural building complex. For the future, we are starting this month to plan for the adding of nine additional drafting design labs and galleries and other offices and so forth. Which should be built in two or three years, so this will help to meet our need for the future.

**SG:** Do you feel that this tremendous influx of new students is going to disrupt the close student-teacher relationship that Cal Poly has always had?

**HB:** Well, I think to a certain extent in other departments, in other divisions, it might tend to do this, and I think it already has in certain large areas of the social sciences for instance. But I think in the major courses in the Agriculture Division, the Engineering Division, where so much of the instruction is carried on in laboratory activity, in which the enrollment is limited to 24 and even less at times, good student-instructor relationship can be continued as part of the Cal Poly program.

**SG:** That's fun. Now in conclusion, do you have any future plans for yourself?

**HB:** Well, my future plans for myself are very closely tied up with the future of the program of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning at Cal Poly. My hope is that possibly we could initiate a program in Architecture on this campus too, to complete the three area majors in Environmental Design. So that we can have a core program for beginning students at the freshman and sophomore level in all three areas, and then branching out in the third and fourth year into Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Urban Planning.

**SG:** These would each be individual majors?

**HB:** Yes, but with a core program to begin with. This is what other universities and departments that have so-called Environmental Design schools talk about, but never have been able to accomplish. They're just kind of an amalgamation of the three departments and they don't have any real core courses for all their students to take. Here in Cal Poly we have already begun this, as far as the relationship of Urban Planning and Landscape Architecture is concerned, and my hope is that we can do this with Architecture in the picture too.

**SG:** I see. Well thank you very much Mr. Boltz for your contributions to this oral history of Cal Poly.

This interview was taped on April 5, 1966. This is Sharon Sforzini Grant speaking.

*End of interview*

# Index

	<u>Page Number</u>
Agriculture	2-3, 5
Architecture	6
Cal Poly Pomona	1-2, 5-6
Environmental Design	6
Kellogg	1-3
Landscape Architecture	1, 3-6
Ornamental Horticulture	3-4
Urban Planning	5-6
Voorhis	1-2
Women Students	3-4